

Questions For The Record From Senator Carl Levin
January 20, 2005

Uranium From Africa

Question #1:

The CIA had sent a memo to you and Mr. Hadley on October 6, 2002 concerning a draft of the President's scheduled October 7, 2002 Cincinnati speech. That memo included an explanation of the reasons why the CIA believed the reference to Iraq's attempts to obtain uranium from Africa should be deleted. The CIA had sent a previous memo to Mr. Hadley (and Mr. Gerson, who was the speechwriter) the day before that memo sent to you, again expressing its doubts about the reports of Iraq's attempts to get uranium from Africa. Finally, the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, called Mr. Hadley directly to ask that the reference to uranium from Africa be deleted from the October 7 speech. As a result of the CIA's multiple expressions of its doubts about these reports, the reference was deleted, and the October 2002 speech made no mention of Iraq's purported attempts to obtain uranium from Africa. Given all this and other activity, were you aware at that time (October 2002) that the Intelligence Community had doubts about the reports of Iraq's purported efforts to obtain uranium from Africa? Were you aware prior to January 28, 2003, the date of the President's State of the Union speech?

Answer:

I do not recall Intelligence Community concerns about the credibility of reports about Iraq's attempts to obtain uranium from Africa either at the time of the Cincinnati speech or the State of the Union speech. I would note that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on prewar intelligence assessments on Iraq stated:

"When coordinating the State of the Union, no Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysts or officials told the National Security Council (NSC) to remove the '16 words' or that there were concerns about the credibility of the Iraq-Niger uranium reporting."

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Question #2:

Prior to the State of the Union speech (January 28, 2003), did you ever discuss with the Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, the Intelligence Community's doubts about reports of Iraq's attempts to get uranium from Africa? If so, when was the first time you discussed the matter with him, and how many times did you discuss the issue prior to the State of the Union?

Answer:

I do not recall discussing Intelligence Community doubts about such reports with Director Tenet prior to the State of the Union.

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Question #3:

Prior to the State of the Union speech of January 2003, did you ever discuss with Stephen Hadley, your deputy, the choice of wording for the speech concerning Iraq's purported attempts to obtain uranium from Africa? Prior to the speech, were you aware that the language had been changed to take reference to the British having learned of such efforts, rather than stating it as the US Government view?

Answer:

Yes, I did discuss with Stephen Hadley concerns the Intelligence Community had about protecting sources and methods regarding reports on Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Africa. These concerns were addressed by citing a foreign government service. I do not recall any discussion of concerns about the credibility of the reports.

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Question #4:

Were you at all involved in the decision-making process about the phraseology of the wording for the January 28, 2003 State of the Union speech condemning Iraq's purported attempts to obtain uranium from Africa ("The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa")? Who was the author of the wording, and was the author aware that the CIA had serious doubts about the claim at least as early as September 2002?

Answer:

Yes, I did discuss with Stephen Hadley concerns the Intelligence Community had about protecting sources and methods regarding reports on Iraqi attempts to procure uranium from Africa. The State of the Union speech was prepared by the President's speechwriters, in coordination with other members of the executive branch. I do not know who actually authored the words about Iraq's attempts to procure uranium from Africa.

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Question #5:

On July 13, 2004 you said the following on Face the Nation: "What I knew at the time is that no one had told us that there were concerns about the British reporting." Given all the activity indicating CIA doubts and concerns about the claim, including a CIA memo sent to you in early October 2002, how could you not know of the doubts and concerns?

Answer:

I do not recall reading or receiving the CIA memo of October 2002.

However, I was aware of the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate stating,

"Iraq also began vigorously trying to procure uranium ore and yellowcake; acquiring either could shorten the time Baghdad needs to produce nuclear weapons."

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Question #6:

In June 8, 2003, on ABC's *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*, you said "At the time the State of the Union address was prepared, there were also other sources that said that they were, the Iraqis were seeking yellow-cake, uranium oxide, froth Africa. And that was taken out of a British report. Clearly, that particular report, we learned subsequently, subsequently, was not credible... The intelligence community did not know at that time or at levels that got to us that this. That there was serious questions about this report."

How could you say such a thing when, before the State of the Union speech, the CIA had told the British of its doubts about the claim and urged them to remove it from their dossier; when the Director of Central Intelligence had personally called your Deputy, Stephen Hadley; when the DCI had sent a memo on October 5 to Mr. Hadley; and when he sent another memo to you and Mr. Hadley on October 6, all explaining why the claim should be removed from the President's October 7 Cincinnati speech, which it was. How can you claim that "the intelligence community did not know at that time or at levels that got to us that this, that there was serious questions about this report"?

Answer:

National Intelligence Estimates represent the authoritative judgment of the Intelligence Community. CIA also provided information citing Iraq's attempts to procure uranium from Africa to the White House four days before the State of the Union speech. I would also note that the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that no CIA analysts or officials expressed doubt about the uranium reporting when coordinating on the State of the Union speech.

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Iraq: Aluminum Tubes

Question #7:

On July 30, 2003 you said "the consensus view of the American intelligence agency" [sic] was ... that the aluminum tubes "were most likely for this use," meaning for centrifuges to make nuclear weapons. However, there was no consensus view on the use of the aluminum tubes; there was a fundamental disagreement within the Intelligence Community, and the Department of Energy and the State Department did not believe the tubes were intended for centrifuges. Given that there was no consensus, why did you say there was?

Answer:

The October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate established the Intelligence Community's authoritative assessment on the aluminum tubes issue. It stated:

"Most agencies believe that Saddam's personal interest in and Iraq's aggressive attempts to obtain high-strength aluminum tubes for centrifuge rotors - as well as Iraq's attempts to acquire magnets, high-speed balancing machines and machine tools - provide compelling evidence that Saddam is reconstituting a uranium enrichment effort for Baghdad's nuclear weapons program. (DOE agrees that reconstitution of the nuclear program is underway but assesses that the tubes are probably not part of the program.)" A footnote noted INR's alternative view to the NIE's authoritative assessment.

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No Distinction Between Iraq and al Qaeda?

Question #8:

Do you make any distinction between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda when it comes to the war on terror, or do you think they are indistinguishable?

Answer:

Yes, there is of course a distinction, but Saddam Hussein did harbor terrorists and had many other ties to terrorists, including contacts with al Qaida, as the 9-11 Commission recognized. And he was an avowed enemy of America and of our allies. The possibility that an outlaw state might pass a weapon of mass destruction to a terrorist is the greatest danger of our time.